

Message Text

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12

ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 ACDA-19 IO-14 COME-00 EB-11 LAB-06 SIL-01

TRSE-00 OMB-01 AID-20 CIEP-02 STR-08 CEA-02 OC-06

CCO-00 DOTE-00 DRC-01 FMC-04 INT-08 SCEM-02 /208 W

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R 291155Z NOV 73

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5918

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, UK, PINT

SUBJECT: BRITISH INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS:

A WINTER OF DISCONTENT

REF: LONDON 13638

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: THE MINERS, WITH SUPPORT FROM THE
POWER ENGINEERS, REPRESENT THE MAIN ARMY TRYING TO
BREAK THROUGH THE GOVERNMENT'S STAGE THREE PAY CODE

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BARRIER. (REFTEL). BUT EVEN IF THEY SHOULD RETREAT

OR BE TURNED BACK DECISIVELY BY THE GOVERNMENT, UNIONS IN MANY OTHER KEY SECTORS OF THE ECONOMY ARE ALSO PRESSING OR PREPARING CLAIMS WHICH ARE MAJOR CHALLENGES TO THE GOVERNMENT'S ANTI-INFLATION PROGRAM. IN THE MEANWHILE, A SERIES OF SHORT STRIKES INCLUDING THOSE BY WORKERS IN ESSENTIAL SERVICES, SUCH AS AMBULANCE DRIVERS IN THE LONDON AREA AND ELSEWHERE, ARE CONTRIBUTING ONCE AGAIN TO THE STARK PRE-CHRISTMAS GLOOM WHICH CHARACTERIZES THE UK INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS SCENE.

END SUMMARY

2. AS THE MINERS AND POWER ENGINEERS DISPUTES CONTINUE WITHOUT SOLUTION (TO BE REPORTED SEPARATELY), MANY OTHER UNIONS, LARGE AND SMALL, ARE PRESSING THEIR OWN CLAIMS WHICH, IN MOST CASES, BREECH THE PAY CODE LIMITATIONS. THESE UNIONS, TO BE SURE, ARE OBSERVING WITH VERY CONSIDERABLE INTEREST THE MINING INDUSTRY DISPUTE, BUT A NUMBER OF THEM WILL PRESS THEIR OWN CHALLENGES NO MATTER HOW THE COAL POWER DISPUTE IS RESOLVED.

3. THE ENGINEERING INDUSTRY - WAGE CLAIMS AFFECTING OVER TWO MILLION ENGINEERING WORKERS, AND INVOLVING A PAY PACKAGE OF ABOUT 700 MILLION POUNDS ARE BEING PRESSED BY THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE CONFEDERATION OF SHIPBUILDING AND ENGINEERING UNIONS, A GROUP OF NINETEEN UNIONS, MOST OF WHOSE WORKERS ARE MEMBERS OF HUGH SCANLON'S AMALGAMATED UNION OF ENGINEERING WORKERS (AUEW). THE EMPLOYERS DECLARE THAT THIS PACKAGE WOULD ULTIMATELY ADD BETWEEN 40 AND 45 PERCENT TO THE INDUSTRY'S COSTS, THUS SHOOTING THE CLAIM WAY BEYOND THE PAY CODE BARRIER. THE CONFEDERATION THREATENS LIGHTNING STOPPAGES SHORTLY IN GLASGOW AND WEST SCOTLAND, INVOLVING 100,000 WORKERS, IN SUPPORT OF THEIR CLAIM.

4. LOCAL AUTHORITY MANUAL WORKERS - THIS GROUP CONSISTS OF ABOUT 900,000 MEMBERS OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES ORGANIZED WITHIN THE NATIONAL UNION OF GENERAL AND MUNICIPAL WORKERS, THE TRANSPORT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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AND GENERAL WORKERS UNION, AND THE NATIONAL UNION OF PUBLIC EMPLOYEES. THE PACKAGE THEY HAVE BEEN OFFERED IS WORTH ABOUT 13 PERCENT OF THE ANNUAL WAGES BILL AND IS THE MAXIMUM UNDER STAGE THREE. WITH FRINGE BENEFITS IT WOULD COST ABOUT 105 MILLION POUNDS. THE UNIONS' CLAIM WAS VERY MUCH IN EXCESS OF THE OFFER AND UNION EXECUTIVE COMMITTEES WILL BE MEETING DURING THE NEXT FEW DAYS TO DECIDE WHETHER OR NOT TO RECOMMEND ACCEPT-

ANCE OR REJECTION TO A SERIES OF DELEGATE CONFERENCES.
(THE SITUATION IS COMPLICATED BY THE FACT THAT A SECTION
OF THIS GROUP, LONDON AMBULANCE DRIVERS, CALLED AN
"UNOFFICIAL STRIKE" WHICH ENDED THIS MORNING AT 7 AM
(NOV. 28). THESE DRIVERS, WHO WERE ENGAGING IN THE
FIRST HISTORICAL STRIKE ACTION OF AMBULANCE DRIVERS IN
GREAT BRITAIN, ARE NOW SEEKING TO STIMULATE NATIONAL
STRIKE ACTION BY AMBULANCE DRIVERS IN ORDER TO GET
SPECIAL PAY RECOGNITION FOR THE SPECIAL CHARACTER OF
THEIR WORK.)

5. RAILWAYS - THE THREE RAILWAY UNIONS, THE ASSOCIATED
SOCIETY OF LOCOMOTIVE ENGINEERS AND FIREMEN (ASLEF),
THE NATIONAL UNION OF RAILWAYMEN (NUR) AND THE TRANS-

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FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

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PORT SALARIED STAFFS' ASSOCIATION (TSSA), ARE SEEKING TO IMPROVE AN ESTIMATED 50 MILLION POUNDS OFFER FROM THE BRITISH RAILWAYS AS PART OF A WAGE RESTRUCTURING AGREEMENT AND IS SEPARATE FROM GENERAL WAGE INCREASES THEY ARE PUTTING FORWARD. ONE OF THESE UNIONS, ASLEF, HAD ALREADY SIGNALLED ITS SERIOUS INTENTIONS BY A ONE-DAY STRIKE TWO WEEKS AGO, AFFECTING CERTAIN SECTIONS OF BRITISH RAIL SOUTHERN REGION. THERE ARE ALSO
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IMPORTANT INTER-UNION DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ASLEF AND THE NUR WHICH COMPLICATE THE SITUATION. A MEETING OF THE THREE UNIONS REPRESENTING ABOUT 250,000 WORKERS AND BRITISH RAILWAY IS TO TAKE PLACE ON FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 30. IN ANY EVENT, THE UNIONS ARE SEEKING MORE THAN THE PAY CODE ALLOWS, AND A BREAKDOWN OF THEIR TALKS WITH THE RAILWAY AUTHORITIES COULD VERY BADLY DISRUPT LONG DISTANCE AND LOCAL TRANSPORT, INCLUDING THE LONDON TRANSPORT SYSTEM, WHICH IS ALREADY SUFFERING SERIOUS MANPOWER SHORTAGES WHICH HAVE CURTAILED SERVICE.

6. DOCKERS - AN UNOFFICIAL NATIONAL DOCKERS' SHOP STEWARD COMMITTEE IS THREATENING A ONE-DAY STRIKE IN SUPPORT OF A 20 PERCENT PAY CLAIM WHICH IS IN EXCESS OF STAGE THREE. THEY ARE HOPING TO GET SUPPORT FROM DOCK WORKERS AT LONDON, MERSEYSIDE, SOUTHAMPTON, HULL AND SCOTTISH PORTS. THE KEY PORTS WHICH COULD BE ULTIMATELY AFFECTED ARE LONDON AND LIVERPOOL.

7. THESE ARE SOME OF THE MAJOR INDUSTRIAL DISPUTES WHICH, TOGETHER WITH THOSE IN THE COAL AND ELECTRICITY ENGINEERING SECTORS, ARE PLAGUING THE HEATH GOVERNMENT. THERE ARE, IN ADDITION, PAY CLAIMS BEING PRESSED BY ABOUT 420,000 TEACHERS IN UK STATE SCHOOLS, WHO ARE SEEKING A 25 PERCENT OVERALL PAY INCREASE; BY THE 170,000 CLERICAL WORKERS IN LONDON CLEARING BANKS FOR A 25 PERCENT INCREASE; AND BY THE JOURNALISTS UNION, REPRESENTING ABOUT 9,500 PROVINCIAL JOURNALISTS IN MANY PARTS OF THE UNITED KINGDOM, AS WELL AS SEVERAL UNIONS IN OTHER SECTORS. CLAIMS WHICH HAVE BEEN DRAWN UP BY GAS SUPPLY MANUAL WORKERS AND ELECTRICITY

SUPPLY MANUAL WORKERS HAVE NOT YET BEEN PRESENTED BUT
COULD CAUSE PROBLEMS IN THE NEW YEAR.

8. FURTHER DETAILS RELATING TO PAY CLAIMS PENDING AS
WELL AS THOSE WHICH HAVE ALREADY BEEN SETTLED WILL BE
TRANSMITTED BY AIRGRAM.

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